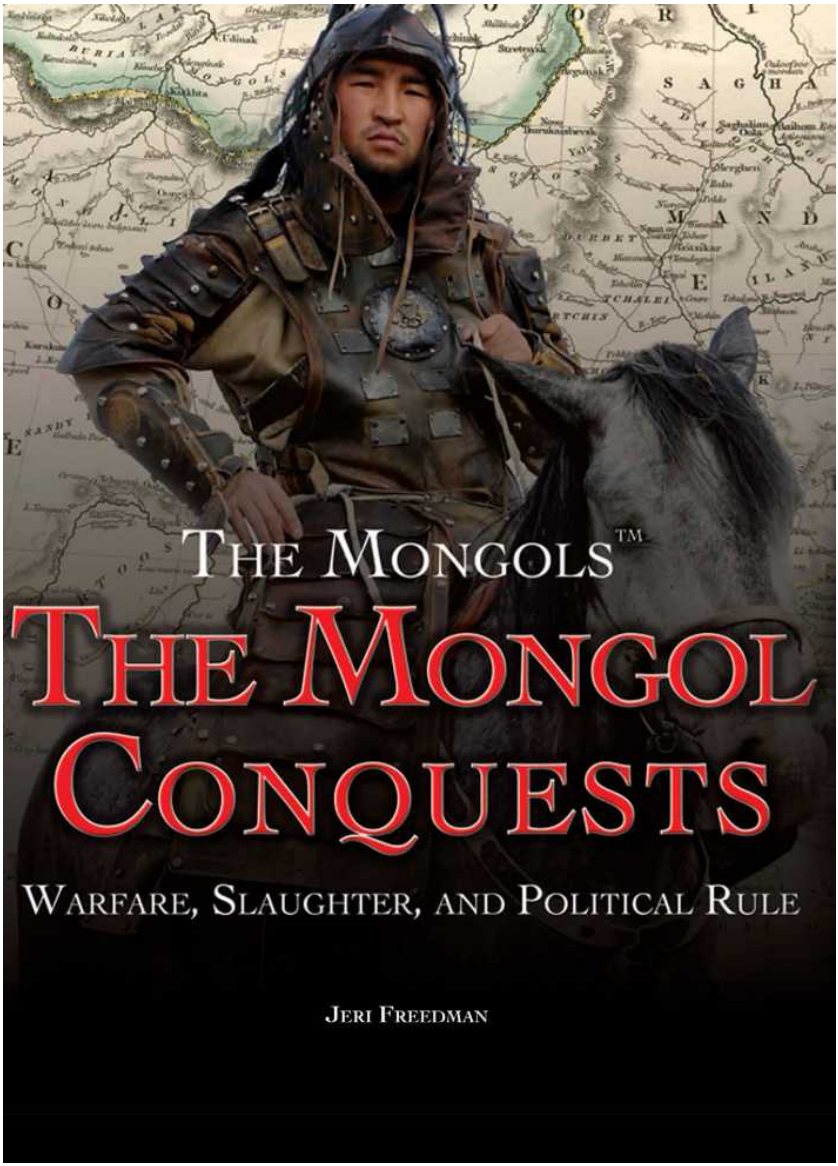
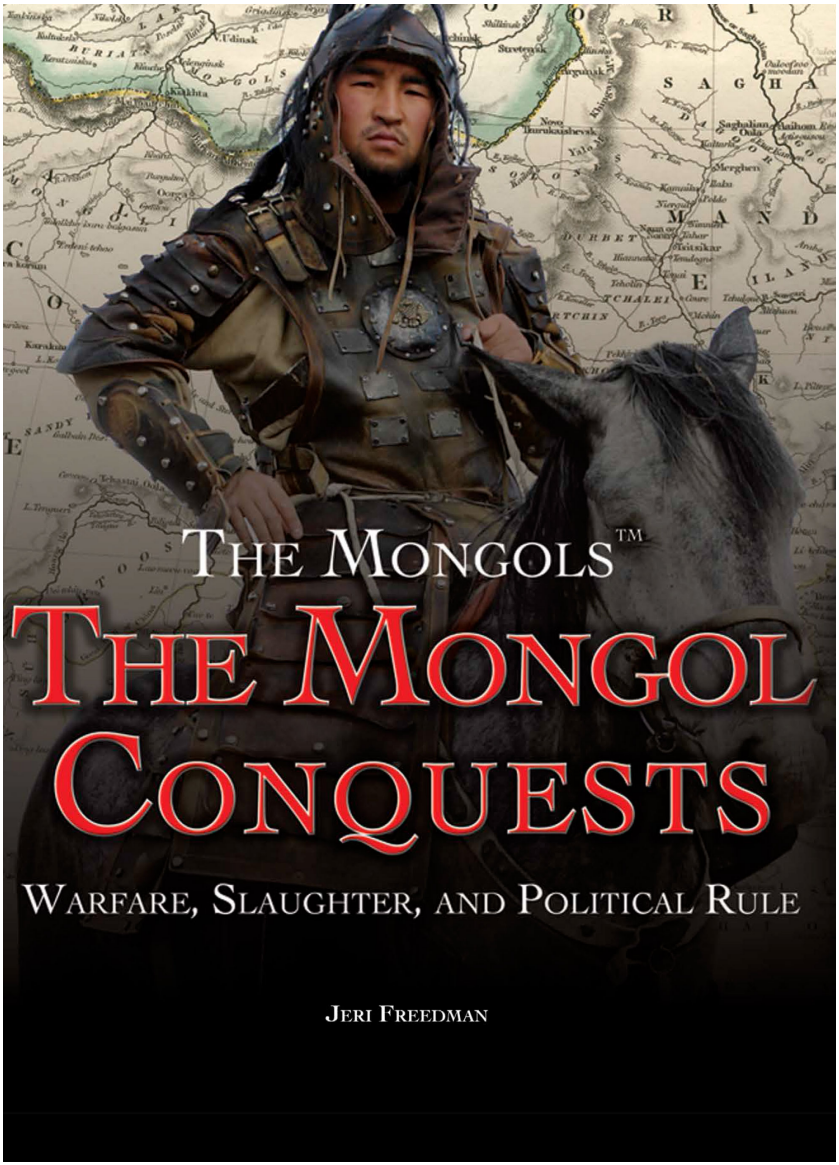

THE MONGOLS™
THE MONGOL CONQUESTS
WARFARE, SLAUGHTER, AND POLITICAL RULE
JERI FREEDMAN

1. Introduction
2. Chapter 1
   The Rise of a Conqueror
3. Chapter 2
   A Conquering Army
4. Chapter 3
   Conquering Asia
5. Chapter 4
   The Invasion of Europe
6. Chapter 5
   An Empire and a Dynasty
7. Chapter 6
   Ruling an Empire
8. Glossary
9. For More Information
10. For Further Reading
11. Bibliography
12. Index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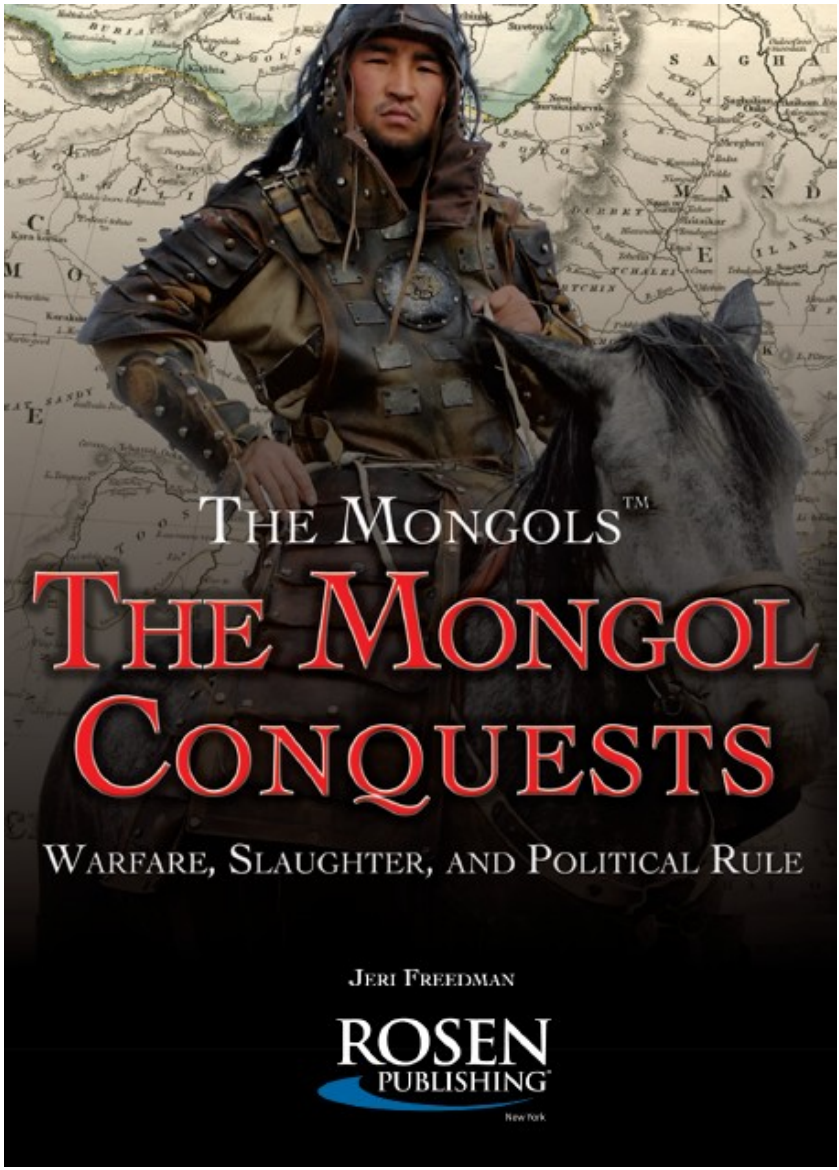

Published in 2017 by The Rosen Publishing Group, Inc.

29 East 21st Street, New York, NY 10010

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First Edition

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Freedman, Jeri, author.

Title: Mongol conquests : warfare, slaughter, and political rule / Jeri Freedman.
Description: First edition. | New York : Rosen Publishing, 2017. | Series: The Mongols | Audience: Grade 7 to 12. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2015047621| ISBN 9781499463606 (library bound) | ISBN 9781499463583 (pbk.) | 9781499463590 (6 pack)

Subjects: LCSH: Mongols--History--To 1500.

Classification: LCC DS19 .F74 2016 | DDC 950/.2--dc23 LC record available at http://lccn.loc.gov/2015047621

Manufactured in China

CONTENTS

Introduction

Chapter 1
The Rise of a Conqueror

Chapter 2
A Conquering Army

Chapter 3
Conquering Asia

Chapter 4
The Invasion of Europe

Chapter 5
An Empire and a Dynasty

Chapter 6
Ruling an Empire

Glossary

For More Information

For Further Reading

Bibliography

Index

Introduction

People have long been fascinated by the Mongols and their conquest of millions of miles of Asia and eastern Europe in the thirteenth century. Contrary to popular portrayal, the Mongols were not simply bloodthirsty barbarians cutting a swath of destruction across the Eastern world. They were ruthless in war, but they were also a well-organized military force whose leadership excelled at strategy and military innovation. They pioneered many economic and cultural concepts, including a system of advancement based on merit rather than family ties; religious tolerance; protection of trade routes; a postal system; paper currency; and, in the later empire, support for science, technology, and the arts.

At the time that the Mongols embarked on their conquests, most peoples in the East and Middle East were living in clan-based tribal societies. These tribes were constantly at war with each other, fighting over territory and scarce resources. The Mongols were a group of individual tribes living in central Asia. From their beginnings as a tribal people spread out in small groups across the steppes of central Asia, they became a nearly unstoppable force that conquered much of Asia and Europe. Ultimately they created an empire that stretched across almost nine million square miles (twenty-three million square kilometers). Their empire was nearly nine times larger than that created

by the ancient Romans. By 1300, the Mongols controlled nearly one-quarter of the 439 million people in the world at that time.

The Mongols lived in round tentlike structures called yurts, which could be taken apart and moved as they traveled from place to place.

Why did the Mongols first embark on their conquests in the early thirteenth century? The exact reasons are unknown, but scholars have proposed the following as possible reasons. One suggestion is that a drop in temperature from 1180 to 1220 resulted in a reduction in good grazing land for the Mongol herds, which were critical to their survival. The need to find more and better land may have contributed to their desire

to move out of their traditional homeland. A second factor was probably the efforts by the Jin dynasty (which controlled northern China) and the Xia dynasty (which controlled northwestern China) to cut off trade between China and the Mongols. The Mongols relied on trade for many goods they needed to survive, and this action may have led them to embark on raids and invasions into China.

Whatever the reasons, Genghis Khan, born on the Asian steppes, united the various nomadic tribes of northeast Asia and set out on a series of conquests that ultimately created an empire stretching from the Pacific Ocean to eastern Europe. This book will describe the Mongol conquests, the strategies and tactics that made the Mongols such successful warriors, the specific engagements that resulted in the creation of the empire, the nature of Mongol rule, and the cultural impacts of their widespread conquest.

Chapter 1
The Rise of a Conqueror

The Mongols lived on the steppes (plains) of central Asia in an area whose northern edge bordered Russia and China. The Mongols were a tribal people. In the twelfth century, about seven hundred thousand Mongols lived in small groups spread out across the

steppes. Constantly on the move, they had few resources and nothing to fall back on when times were hard. It was from this environment that the Mongols rose to create the largest land empire in history.

When Genghis Khan (1162-1227) was born, he was named Temujin. He lived in an area that today forms the border between Mongolia and Siberia. The world into which he was born was characterized by constant warfare between clans. His family held a powerful place in his clan. However, after rivals murdered his father, the clan abandoned his family to escape the burden of supporting them. In his early teens, Temujin killed his older half-brother and assumed the role of head of the family. In 1178, at the age of sixteen, he married a woman named Borte, with whom he would have four sons and several daughters.

Genghis Khan, founder of the Mongol empire, leads his tr ie boy named Temujin would become one of the ors in history.

The Early Battles

Not long after Temujin married Borte, members of a rival clan, the Merkits, attacked his encampment and

kidnapped her. Temujin took the rest of his family and his friends into hiding while the three-hundred-strong band of Merkit warriors searched the countryside for him. When the Merkits left, Temujin set about assembling a large enough force to rescue Borte. Creating alliances with the clans of his friends and of Ong, a close friend of Temujin's murdered father, he raised an army of mounted warriors. They attacked the Merkits at an encampment on the banks of the Khilok River in Siberia by mounting a surprise attack at night. Temujin won the battle and rescued Borte. He forced the leader of the Merkits to identify the three hundred warriors who had invaded his encampment and then had all of them slaughtered. This first battle established the teenaged Temujin's reputation as a warrior who could raise and manage an army.

Temujin continued to form alliances and increase his reputation as a powerful warrior. As his fame grew, greater numbers of followers joined him in his early battles. His success in warfare led to his rise as khan (leader of the Mongols). He approached warfare differently than other Mongols, who engaged in warfare among clans. In a revolutionary strategy, he chose to put those allies he deemed most skilled, rather than his relatives, into key positions. When he defeated an enemy force, he executed the leaders and then incorporated the rest of the clan into his own. In this way, his army continued to grow rapidly.

Life on the Asian Steppes

The Mongol people lived in small groups organized around clans, groups of families that were descended from a common ancestor. There was a lot of competition among the tribes for scarce resources, and wars between the tribes were common.

Life on the steppes was harsh. Water and grass for animals were limited. This meant that the Mongols became nomads. Rather than living in one place and building cities, they traveled from place to place.

They rode horses and raised livestock, taking their herds with them when they moved. They carried on some trade with China in order to acquire items they needed but could not produce themselves.

A young Mongol boy sits on a small, chunky horse, typical of those used by the Mongols.

They traveled with flocks of sheep and, in some areas, yaks, camels, or goats. They would slaughter herd animals for food, usually in the winter. They also hunted for animals such as rabbits, squirrels, and wild boar. They used the hides of animals to make their clothing. For shoes they wore leather boots or sandals.

Weather on the steppes could be brutal. The Mongols often had to contend with heavy snow and ice storms. About twice a decade drought struck the steppes, making it hard for them to keep their herds and flocks of animals alive. Because of their

nomadic lifestyle, they could not store resources to see them through hard times. Instead they had to move into new territory to find food and water.

The most important animal of the Mongols was the horse. Mongol horses were small and chunky. They stood only 12 to 13 hands tall (4-4.25 feet/1.2-1.3 meters) but were very sturdy. Young boys started training to ride by herding and hunting on horseback. Once a boy was old enough to fight, he became a warrior and maintained four to seven horses.

A Single Nation

By 1205, Temujin had defeated all rival tribes and was ruler of an area roughly the size of modern Mongolia. He called an assembly, inviting representatives from all the territories he had conquered, and established a single united country. The new country included approximately one million people. Temujin was proclaimed Chinggis Khan (westernized as Genghis Khan), which means “universal ruler.”

This illustration from a fourteenth-century illuminated manuscript shows Genghis Khan on his throne after being elected ruler of the Mongols.

Now that he had a country to govern, Genghis Khan banned many traditional tribal practices and substituted a more orderly series of laws. He outlawed the kidnapping and selling of women, made it illegal to

enslave any Mongol, and made livestock theft punishable by death. He also discontinued the use of inherited aristocratic titles. In the place of these traditional tribal practices, he instituted a central bureaucracy to enforce order in his new nation. He had a system of writing created and had a census conducted at regular intervals. Genghis Khan himself practiced the tribal religion of animism (the belief that supernatural spirits exist in the natural elements and can intercede in human affairs); however, his army included Christians, Muslims, and Buddhists. In response to the diverse nature of his followers, Genghis Khan decreed freedom of religion in his new country.

CHAPTER 2

A CONQUERING ARMY

One reason that the Mongol army was so successful in conquering other tribes was that Genghis Khan made changes to the way fighting units were organized. Previously, tribes fought in clan-based units consisting of people who were related, regardless of how skilled they were. Genghis Khan organized the army so that each unit had soldiers with the skills needed to succeed. He also instituted rules that instilled discipline. These approaches created an army that was more effective and efficient than the traditional clan-based tribes it fought.

Recruitment and Training

He organized his armies into formal units that included warriors with a variety of skills, choosing the members by ability rather than family ties. During battles, he forbade looting until the battle was completely over. This kept the soldiers focused and instilled discipline in the troops.

Not every Mongol man participated in the mobile army that expanded the empire. Many were left to defend conquered territory, tend herds, and perform

other necessary tasks. When the Mongols conquered an area, they selected men from the conquered people to join their army. Many of them served in fortifications or as laborers for the army. Even these support troops were subjected to regular inspections and military rules, however. This practice resulted in a disciplined military organization that was unique at that time. Warriors drafted from nomadic peoples who were used to fighting on horseback became mounted soldiers in the Mongol army. Warriors from non-nomadic tribes were ill suited to mounted fighting, and they were allowed to fight in their own manner on foot. This gave the Mongols a valuable pool of soldiers who could be used for close combat.

This work by C. L. Doughty shows Mongol soldiers breaking through the Great Wall of China during the Mongol conquest of China. The non-Mongol soldiers fought on foot.

The Mongol army consisted of two components. The main body of the army was mobile, continually advancing and conquering new territory. The *tamma*

was a special force that stayed for long periods of time on the border of a conquered land and often included soldiers from a variety of regions. The job of the tamma was to hold the land that the army had conquered.

Mongol children were trained to ride from an early age and to shoot arrows from horseback, using a bow suitable for their age and controlling the horse with their knees. Once they reached adulthood, they engaged in military drills such as shooting at gourds on poles while riding past. Such a lifetime of training not only made their shooting accurate but also built up the strength of their arms so they could use large, heavy bows by the time they joined the army. Girls as well as boys learned to ride and use bows and arrows. Most Mongol warriors were male, but women who were especially skilled and strong did fight as well.

Being a nomadic people, the Mongols were not skilled in the building of fortifications. Therefore, in addition to warriors, they drafted engineers and artisans from among the people they conquered. The engineers designed and oversaw the building of fortifications. They also designed and built artillery pieces such as catapults, which could be used to attack enemy fortifications. The artisans crafted equipment needed by the army. The *keshik* was Genghis Khan's elite bodyguard. Genghis Khan recruited the sons of commanders of military units, but he also accepted able and talented individuals from

other social classes. The number of men in the keshik increased over time with each khan. It served as a source of officers for both the military and civil administrators.

A Mongol horseman shoots a composite bow from horseback during a battle. The Mongols trained from an early age to shoot arrows from horseback.

Weapons of War

The central tool of the Mongols was the horse. Therefore, the weapons that the Mongols developed were designed for use on horseback. The most important weapons were the bows and arrows. The Mongols made composite bows out of birch wood, animal sinew, and sheep's horn; these were superior to bows made of a single material because they were

both strong and light. The Mongols used three types of arrows.

Two types were used in warfare, and the third for communication. An arrow with a wooden shaft and a file-sharpened iron tip was used in large quantities as a weapon that could be shot from up to 650 feet (198 m) away. Slicing arrows with a V-shaped notch were also used in warfare. The third type of arrow had holes drilled into it. It was shot into the air when the army was on the move and would produce a whistling sound that alerted the warriors as to the direction they should move.

The army was followed by a baggage train of camels and packhorses carrying equipment and supplies. For communication between units and between the army and the khan, the Mongols maintained a series of way stations along the routes they traveled. These stations, called *yam,* were similar to those later used by the Pony Express in America. Messengers and scouts could ride from one yam to the next, exchange horses, and then continue on their way with the messages they were to deliver.

An exhibit at the Fembank Museum of Natural History in Atlanta shows some of the weapons used by the Mongols, including a variety of straight and curved swords.

Although most combat was conducted from horseback, there were times when warriors had to

engage in close combat. Ordinary soldiers were equipped with clubs or maces (spiked clubs). Those of higher rank used swords, axes, halberds (a double-sided axe on a long pole), or spears. Some Mongol warriors wore leather armor and also used it to protect their horses. They wore acorn-shaped helmets and carried felt coats to wear in cold weather. The helmets were made of bronze or iron covered with a layer of bronze. If a soldier lost his weapons or mistreated or neglected his horses, he would be whipped, made to do hard labor, or thrown out of the army.

Espionage and Intelligence Gathering

In addition to skilled warriors, a successful attack requires military intelligence-information about the enemy. The Mongols had three main sources for acquiring information. Merchants, who traveled far and wide throughout China and central Asia, were one source. They were excellent providers of information about the political and economic aspects of the towns where they traded. They gave the khan information, and in turn the khan protected the trade routes the merchants traveled. The second source was expeditionary forces-small units sent into the field to deal with a specific threat. The third source was the *algincin-scouts* sent out specifically to spy on the enemy and provide information on their fortifications and defense, numbers of warriors, and other aspects of importance to military planning. The scouts rode about 30 miles (48 km) ahead of the army and relayed information back to the commanders via the yam system or by using signal flags. In addition to providing information to be used in formulating an attack strategy, the presence of the scouts in advance of the army made it impossible for the enemy to launch a surprise attack on the Mongol forces. The Mongols also planted spies in the courts

of enemy rulers to sow dissension.

Military Tactics

The Mongols used particular military strategies to overcome enemy armies. The Mongols' preferred approach was to surround the enemy with forces on all sides. They could thus start an attack from the front and then have forces at the flanks (sides) or rear charge in. One such tactic was the "barrage of arrows." In this strategy, the Mongols would surround the enemy and fire a massive number of arrows into the air to hit enemy soldiers in a random but deadly fashion. Even at a distance, this barrage could cause havoc in the enemy formation. When the orderly ranks broke, the Mongols would charge.

They also made effective use of concentrated force. For example, they would line up a large number of catapults to apply deadly force at a particular point where they wanted to attack a fortification to which they were laying siege. Another tactic consisted of using waves of twenty archers. One wave would charge toward a target, fire arrows, then bolt away as another wave of archers charged in and repeated the process. This use of successive waves in a hit-and-run fashion made it possible to do great damage to the enemy while making the Mongols difficult to hit. A method the Mongols often used to entrap enemy forces was the feigned retreat. In this tactic, a small force would approach and attack the enemy and then retreat,

pursued by the enemy forces—but they were retreating toward the main body of the Mongol army. In this way, the enemy was lured to the Mongol line and destroyed.

In their early battles, the Mongols were ill equipped to engage in siege warfare. They lacked the means to attack a well-fortified town or fort. However, Genghis Khan recognized this weakness. After his early successes gave him access to technologically advanced people, such as the Chinese, he added foreign engineers to his army. These engineers built equipment such as catapults, which allowed the Mongols to conduct sieges. They would surround and blockade a town or fort, keeping the inhabitants from receiving food or supplies. They would then capture people from the surrounding area and force them to collect material and build the necessary siege equipment such as catapults, scaling ladders, and battering rams. They made the captives operate the equipment, attacking the city with catapults, fire arrows, and battering rams. Sometimes the Mongols would slaughter the inhabitants of a captured fort or town in order to spread fear of their army. In this way, they were able to get other towns and forts to surrender without the need to attack.

Chapter 3
Conquering Asia

The first Mongol conquests took place in Asia from 1206 to 1227. In their effort to create a large unified empire, they first attacked the neighboring principalities in China.

The Western Xia

The first major conquest by the Mongols was the Xia Empire, also called the Tangut Empire or Xi-Xia. The Xia Empire covered northwestern China and parts of Tibet. The Mongols began with a series of military raids that started in 1207. In 1209, Genghis Khan embarked on a major invasion to conquer the Western Xia. After capturing several cities, the Mongols reached the fortress of Kiemen, which guarded the pass through the Helan Mountains where the army had to pass to reach the Xia capital, Yinchaun. The Kiemen fortress contained a force of tens of thousands of soldiers. After a two-month standoff, the Mongols pretended to retreat, luring the Xia forces out of the fortress. Once they faced the Xia army on the open field, the Mongols defeated them and moved on to Yinchuan. Unable to break into the fortified city, the Mongols embarked on a siege of the Xia capital.

After a year, faced with the starvation of his people, Li Anquan surrendered. The Western Xia became subjects of the Mongols and paid them annual tribute. In addition to the income from the tribute, the Mongols gained control of the Silk Road, a path followed by merchants bringing goods from the West to trade in the East. Protection of the Silk Road provided the Mongols with additional income from the caravans that traveled it.

An illustration from the fourteenth-century work The History of the Mongols shows them attacking a Tangut/Xia fortress. They razed the fortress to the ground and looted it.

The Campaigns of 1211-1215

The Jin were people from Manchuria. The Jin dynasty

controlled northern China as far as the Yangtze River. Their capital was on the site of what is now Beijing. A large and powerful dynasty, the Jin demanded tribute from the tribes of the Asian steppes. Once the Mongols conquered the Western Xia, the Jin demanded that the Mongols pay tribute to them. Genghis Khan refused and instead advanced further into Jin territory. The chief of the Ongut, one of the tribes allied with the Mongols, revealed to them a path to the heart of the Jin Empire. The first major battle against the Jin took place in 1211 at a pass called Badger Mouth, in the mountains of Zhangjakou. The Mongols slaughtered thousands of Jin troops, then captured numerous towns in Jin territory. As Genghis Khan led troops south, one of his generals, Jebe, led others east into Manchuria. Jebe captured Mukden (modern-day Shenyang). In 1212, Liu-Ke, the leader of the nomadic Khitan people who lived in the area, declared his allegiance to the Mongols, and the Mongols gained control over Manchuria, which had been controlled by the Jin.

The Mongols moved on to strike at the heart of the Jin. In 1213, they laid siege to the Jin capital at Zhongdu (Beijing).

Rockets in Warfare

The Chinese work Wubeizhi (On Warfare) includes this illustration, which demonstrates the use of exploding arrows in Chinese warfare.

In the first century CE, the Chinese learned how to mix sulfur, saltpeter, and charcoal dust to make gunpowder, which they used to create fireworks. At first they filled hollow bamboo tubes with gunpowder and threw them into fires at festivals to create celebratory explosions. Eventually, they discovered that

they could attach the tubes to arrows and shoot them into the sky with bows for better effect. When the gunpowder ignited, the gas that escaped from the tubes turned them into rockets and propelled them across the sky.

When the Mongols attacked the Chinese, the Chinese fired their gunpowder rockets, which they called “arrows of fire,” against the Mongols. Once the Mongols recovered from their initial shock, they saw the advantage of such technology. After the Mongols succeeded in defeating the Chinese, they obtained the Chinese technology for making rockets and employed Chinese rocketry experts in their army. As they conquered Asia and advanced through Russia, eastern Europe, and central Europe, they spread the knowledge of rocket technology. By the end of the thirteenth century, rockets became a part of the arsenal of military units throughout Asia and Europe.

The Jin army inflicted several defeats on the Mongols, but the Mongols ultimately crushed the Jin army and broke through Juyongguan Pass and Zijingkou Gap. The Mongols spread destruction across the plains around Zhongdu throughout 1213 and 1214, finally surrounding the capital in 1214. The Jin agreed to pay tribute to the Mongols, and by 1215 the Mongols controlled Zhongdu. In 1215, they forced the Jin to move their capital from Zhongdu south to Kaifeng, where the Mongols wiped out the Jin completely in 1234.

The Khwarezmian Empire

The Mongol conquest of the Khwarezmian Empire extended the Mongol Empire into the Middle East.

Initially, Genghis Khan didn't intend to invade the Khwarezmian Empire, which covered much of central Asia, including modern-day Iran and Afghanistan. As a result of the Mongol conquests in Asia, the Mongol territory shared a border with Khwarezmia. In the wake of the war with the Jin, Genghis Khan was not anxious to become embroiled in a war with the Khwarezmian Empire and saw the benefits of mutual trade. In 1218, he sent messages to the Khwarezmian ruler, Shah Ala ad-Din Muhammad, suggesting a peace treaty and trade agreement between the two empires, but the shah was suspicious of Genghis Khan's intentions. Genghis Khan subsequently sent a caravan to set up trade relations with Khwarezmia, but the governor of the city of Otrar in Khwarezmia had the members of the caravan arrested, claiming they were spies. Genghis Khan then sent several envoys to meet the shah and arrange the release of the caravan. Instead, the shah had the envoys executed. Angered by this insult, Genghis Khan initiated an attack on Khwarezmia, with the Mongols crossing the Tien Shan Mountains (Celestial Mountains) to advance into Khwarezmia in 1219.

For this campaign, Genghis Khan incorporated a number of techniques of warfare he had learned from the Chinese. He supplemented his cavalry with supporting foot units and took heavy siege equipment and gunpowder with him. The Mongols used catapults and a type of mortar called the *huochong,* adopted from the Chinese engineers, to project gunpowder bombs at

the enemy forces. The shah had sent parts of his army to protect various cities. Genghis Khan divided his army and sent one force to locate and kill the shah, while others mopped up the individual pieces of the shah's army. The main part of the Mongol army, led by Genghis Khan, laid siege to Otrar, taking it after five months. The split Mongol armies then advanced south and west until they succeeded in capturing all the major cities of the Khwarezmian Empire. One of Genghis Khan's four sons by Borte, Ogedei, so impressed him with his military leadership that Genghis Khan declared him his official heir.

Once the Mongols succeeded in capturing all of the empire, Genghis Khan set up garrisons of Mongol troops to keep the territory secure and then returned to Mongolia. The defeat of Khwarezmia left Iraq, Syria, and Turkey vulnerable to Mongol conquest. In addition, their foothold in Khwarezmia gave the Mongols a convenient location from which they could later invade Kievan Rus and subsequently Poland, Hungary, the area around the Baltic Sea, and Germany.

The Battle of Kalka River

After completing the conquest of central Asia, Genghis Khan gave permission for two of his military leaders, Jebe and Subutai the Valiant, to embark on a foray into the Rus, an area in modern-day Ukraine. Jebe and Subutai crossed the Caucasus Mountains, entering the territory of the Slavs. On May 31,1223, on the banks of

the Kalka River, the Mongols engaged a force from the Rus principalities of Kiev, Cumans, and Galich, led by Mstislav the Bold and Mstislav III of Kiev. The Mongols defeated the Rus coalition. This battle marked the Mongols' first effort to advance their empire beyond Asia.

The Mongol army defeats an alliance of defending forces at the Kalka River. The Mongol victory gave them control of the region.

Genghis Khan's Death

Genghis Khan died in 1227. No one knows exactly how. Various accounts exist claiming that he died of a fall from a horse, disease, or wounds sustained in battle. Equally mysterious is the location of his tomb. The Mongols kept its location a secret and reputedly slaughtered anyone the funeral procession encountered

en route. Many experts believe it to be somewhere near a mountain in Mongolia called Burkhan Khaldun. At the time of his death, Genghis Khan left behind an empire stretching twelve million square miles (thirty-one million square km).

Chapter 4

The Invasion of Europe

Genghis Khan was succeeded by his son Ogedei (1186-1241), who was elected Great Khan in 1229. Under Ogedei Khan's leadership, the Mongols completed the conquest of the Jin Empire in 1234. Their success led to conflict with the Southern Song dynasty. Ogedei Khan embarked on a war that ultimately lasted forty-five years.

In the end, the Mongols were masters of all of China. The Mongols then embarked on the first of a series of campaigns against Korea. Ogedei's ambitions ranged far beyond Asia, however. Under his direction, the Mongols began the conquest of eastern Europe.

The Invasion of Georgia

The Mongols had engaged in forays into Georgia as far back as 1220, but they did not take over the country until 1236, when they embarked on the conquest of the Caucasus (the Caucasus Mountains area, between the Black and Caspian seas, along the border between modern-day Russia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan).

The major invasion of the Caucasus by the Mongols took place in 1236. Two factors left Georgia ripe for the picking. first was a war with the exiled shah of Khwarezmia, Jalal ad-Din Mingburnu, in 1225. The shah demanded that Georgia join him in fighting the Mongols, who had attacked Khwarezmia. When they refused, he attacked and captured the city of Tbilisi. The conflict devastated Georgia and reduced its ability to withstand the Mongols' attacks. In 1231, Mingburnu died, leaving the country without a strong military leader. In 1236, a Mongol commander, Chormaqan, attacked Georgia and the Armenian principalities it controlled. The Mongol army was large, and few of the Georgian nobles put up serious resistance. The Mongols gained control of Georgia and Armenia, requiring the government to pay annual tribute and provide men for the army.

This ancient district of Tblisi is located on the bank of the Mtkvari (Kura River), in southern Georgia. The Mongols captured Tblisi and then gained control over Georgia and Armenia.

The Conquest of Kievan Rus

Subsequent to the Battle of Kalka River, the Mongols invaded Kievan Rus, an area covering much of modern-day Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus. A massive invasion was conducted from 1237 to 1240 under the direction of Genghis Khan's grandson Batu Khan, founder of the Golden Horde division of the Mongol army. In November 1237, Batu Khan sent envoys to demand that Yuri II, ruler of the region, swear allegiance to the khan. When Yuri refused, the Mongols besieged the city of Ryazan and, after six days of fighting, completely destroyed the city. The Golden Horde then burned Kolomna, Moscow, and the capital city of Vladimir to the ground. Most of the royal family died in the fire. The crown prince escaped and mustered an army, but it was destroyed by the Mongols at the Sit River. Batu Khan then eradicated fourteen more Rus cities. All Rus principalities became part of the Mongol Empire.

The Sack of Kiev

The Siege of Kiev took place in November 1240. Batu Khan sent his cousin Mongke with an army to attack the city of Kiev. Impressed with the splendor of the

city, Mongke sent envoys asking the city to surrender. In response his envoys were killed, and Mongke began an assault. A force of Turkic mercenaries, who often worked for the Rus principalities, attempted to reach Kiev to aid in the defense. However, they were defeated by Batu Khan and the main part of the Mongol army on the way.

This illustration from the Legend of Saint Hedwig in 1353 shows the Mongol army defeating the combined forces of Poles, Czech, and Germans at Liegnitz in 1241.

The entire Mongol force camped outside the gates of Kiev. For several days, the Mongols bombarded Kiev using catapults. On December 6, the Mongols succeeded in breeching the walls. After taking heavy losses in hand-to-hand combat, the Kievans took refuge in the city center. The next day the Mongols massacred

the population. They plundered the city and burned it. The sack of Kiev completed the conquest of the Rus and left the way open for the Mongols to advance into Poland and Hungary. Although the destruction of Kievan Rus was brutal, many historians feel that the consolidation of the principalities and the establishment of trade routes across the region, bringing economic prosperity, played a significant role in the subsequent rise of the Russian Empire.

The Knights Templar in Eastern Europe

The Knights Templar were the most wealthy and powerful of the military orders supported by the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages. First recognized by the church in 1129, the order played a major role in the Crusades.

Members of the Knights Templar wore distinctive white mantles with a red cross.

In the Middle Ages, the Christian western European powers desired to expand their influence into eastern Europe. One way to do this was to encourage colonizationzation of the frontier areas between eastern and western Europe. The church also wished to convert non-Christians to Christianity. This combination of interests created a situation in which powerful landowners and nobles in western Europe would lay claim to frontier land in the Balkans and then donate the land to religious orders, particularly the military orders, such as the Knights Templar. These orders would settle the land and, if it became profitable, pay a percentage of their gains to the donator. In this way, the Templars gained a foothold in Poland and other parts of eastern Europe.

The Templars held territories in eastern Germany and Poland, as well as some strongholds in Hungary. When the Mongols attacked Duke Henry II's army in lower Silesia, the Templars joined the combat. They were not able to stand against the Mongol forces, however, and their strongholds, and the villages they protected, were destroyed.

The Invasion of Poland

After their success in conquering Kievan Rus, the

Mongols proceeded to move into eastern Europe. They invaded Poland and Hungary at three points. One branch of the army attacked the city of Legnica in the Silesia province of the kingdom of Poland. The Battle of Legnica took place on April 9, 1241, between the Mongols and a combined European force near the city. Duke Henry II of Poland mustered a force of Poles, Czechs, Germans, and members of religious-military orders, including the Knights Templar and knights of the Teutonic Order. Duke Henry began the battle by using his cavalry to attack the Mongol forces. The Mongols feigned retreat, pursued by the Polish cavalry, whom they drew away from the main force. The Mongol army then flanked the Polish troops and destroyed them.

The Conquest of Hungary

A second branch of the Mongol army attacked southern Transylvania, which was part of Hungary at that time, and defeated the Transylvanian Hungarian army. The Battle of the Sajo River, also called the Battle of Mohi, took place on April 11, 1241. It was the major conflict between the Kingdom of Hungary, ruled by Bela IV, and the Mongols. The main force, led by Batu Khan and General Subutai, attacked through the Verecke pass. It crushed the Hungarian army led by Count Palatine. During the invasion almost half of the inhabited towns were destroyed, and about a quarter of the population was killed.

In December 1241, Ogedei Khan died. The Mongols returned to Mongolia to participate in the election of a new khan. Though Ogedei Khan's death kept the Mongols from advancing farther into Europe, their presence in eastern Europe created routes for communication, travel, and trade between the East and the West. Diplomatic relations were established between the Mongols and the Europeans. Europeans learned the Chinese techniques for making gunpowder and paper, and trade in goods began to take place on a steady basis.

Chapter 5

An Empire and a Dynasty

Although the Mongols had made military forays into the Middle East as far back as the 1220s, they did not embark on a full-scale effort to take over Iran, Syria, and Mesopotamia until the 1250s. At that time, Mongke Khan (12091259), grandson of Genghis Khan, resolved to establish firm authority over these areas. The khan gave his brother Hulegu instructions to make various Muslim states submit to Mongol rule.

The Sack of Baghdad

Baghdad was the capital of the Abbasid Caliphate (monarchy), whose rulers were descended from Abbas, one of Muhammad's uncles. By the time of the Mongol invasion, Baghdad's power had faded, although it was still a major center of Islamic culture. Both Genghis Khan and Ogedei Khan ordered raids on Baghdad, but Abbasid forces sometimes defeated the Mongols. The Abbasids didn't wish for full-scale war with the Mongols, however. Instead, they attempted to ally themselves with the Mongols, sending annual tribute to the khan.

This was not enough for Mongke, however. As part

of his plan to conquer the Muslim lands, in 1257, Mongke ordered his brother Hulegu to make the caliph of Baghdad, Al-Musta'sim, come in person to swear submission and provide a military force to aid in the conquest of Iran. He ordered Hulegu to destroy Baghdad if the caliph refused.

The Mongols lay siege to Baghdad. Over time, the Mongols adopted foreign technologies that allowed them to successfully besiege fortified cities like Baghdad.

Al-Musta'sim refused Mongke's demands. In response, the Mongols embarked on the conquest of Baghdad, which took place from January 29 to February 10, 1258. Hulegu's army has been estimated at 150,000 men. They laid siege to the city, bringing catapults and other equipment to breach the city walls.

When the caliph saw that there was no way to defeat the Mongols, he tried to reopen negotiations, but Hulegu refused. On February 10, the Mongols captured the city. They destroyed the Grand Library, which contained a vast quantity of important Arab texts on scientific, historical, and cultural subjects. They massacred a huge number of citizens. (Estimates range from two hundred thousand to one million people.) They burned mosques, palaces, and other significant buildings. The caliph was killed, according to a number of historical sources, when he was trampled by mounted riders. Baghdad was left a ruin, and many historians feel that its sacking marked the end of the spread of Islamic knowledge and power.

From Baghdad, the Mongols continued moving west to attack Syria, which was ruled by the Ayyubid dynasty. The Mongols were joined by their vassals the Georgians and Armenians. In 1260, the combined force captured the city of Aleppo, and shortly thereafter a Christian Mongol general, Kitbuqa, seized Damascus. The Mongols captured the Ayyubid king, An-Nasir Yusuf, near Gaza, putting an end to the Ayyubid dynasty. The destruction of the dynasties in Baghdad and Syria left Egypt the major center of power in the Middle East.

The Mamluks

After the successes in Syria, Hulegu planned to continue through Palestine into Egypt. This plan was

interrupted, however, when Mongke died in late 1259. In 1260, Hulegu had to return to the Mongol capital, Karakorum, to participate in the election of the next great khan. Hulegu took most of his army with him. He left General Kitbuqa in Syria with a force of only about ten thousand to twenty thousand soldiers.

An illustration from a Mamiuk manual on horsemanship

provides instruction to soldiers. The Mamluks underwent extensive training and practiced regularly, making them a powerful fighting force.

Kitbuqa's forces made some advance toward Egypt, establishing a Mongol garrison in Gaza. Originally the slave warriors of the Egyptian rulers, the Mamluks had become a powerful group of hereditary warriors by the thirteenth century. Seeing the reduced Mongol forces, the Mamluks negotiated with the remnants of the Crusader forces still in the area to obtain their agreement not to interfere in the fighting between the Mamluks and Mongols. The Mamluks engaged the Mongols at Ain Jalut ("Spring of Goliath") in southeastern Galilee in September 1260. The Mamluks successfully used "hit-and-run" tactics, attacking the Mongol forces, then withdrawing to preserve their troops. After many hours of fighting, the Mamluks achieved a decisive victory. They drove the Mongols back and captured Kitbuqa, whom they executed.

Kublai Khan

Kublai Khan (1215-1294) was the grandson of Genghis Khan and brother of Mongke, who became Great Khan in 1251. Mongke put Kublai in charge of subduing the Song dynasty, with the aim of unifying China. Kublai had respect for Chinese

philosophy and adopted a group of Confucian Chinese advisers. They convinced Kublai of the need for generosity and a more humane approach than the traditional Mongol way of dealing with those they ruled. The support he gained from the Chinese people helped Kublai succeed as emperor of China. The Mongols dubbed him Setsen Khan, which means “Wise Khan.”

When Mongke was killed on an expedition into western China in 1259, his younger brother Ariq Boke began to implement plans to become khan. Kublai heard of his plans and held an assembly in which he was elected Great Khan, a fact that was announced ten days later. Ariq Boke ignored the proclamation and had himself declared Great Khan. The dispute led to a war between the two brothers. In 1264, Kublai beat Ariq Boke in battle, and Ariq Boke died two years later.

In December 1260, Hulegu sent another six thousand troops to attack Syria, but they were again driven back by the Mamluks, and thereafter the territory controlled by the Mongols in the Middle East ended at the Tigris River. Despite failing to capture all of the Islamic territories in the Middle East, the Mongols wreaked destruction on the major Islamic centers, destroying both cultural and political institutions, such as the caliphate, that provided stability to the region.

The F inal Conquest of China

Kublai Khan's base was the current Gansu and Shaanxi provinces in the Wei River valley. In 1253, Mongke Khan charged Kublai with conquering the Dali Kingdom, in what would become Yunnan Province. Kublai divided the Mongol forces into three wings. One group rode east to Sichuan basin. The second made its way to the mountains of western Sichuan. The third wing, led by Kublai Khan, moved south to join up with the first group. Kublai captured the capital city of Dali. Unlike most Mongol leaders, he spared the residents. The Dali king, Duan Xingzhi, defected and joined the Mongols with his troops, helping the Mongols conquer the rest of Yunnan. He was appointed maharajah, a position subordinate to Kublai. When Kublai left, unrest broke out, but by

Emperor Huizong (Zhao Bing) was the last ruler of the Song Dynasty and the Southern Song. His defeat cemented Mongol rule in China.

In their early conquests in China, the Mongols had allied with the Song dynasty to fight their common enemy, the Jin. This alliance collapsed after the Mongols conquered the Jin in 1234. Song forces captured the former Chinese capitals of Luoyang, Chang'an, and Kaifeng; held Mongols prisoner; and killed a Mongol ambassador. In response, the Mongols declared war and quickly drove the Song back to the Yangtze River. The Mongols and the Song subsequently were embroiled in a war that lasted

twenty years. Unlike many of the groups the Mongols had conquered, the Song were equipped with the latest weaponry, including rockets and “fire lances”—handheld mortars.

After a number of battles, the Mongols attacked the Song garrison at Hechuan. The garrison held them off, but the general in charge of the Song was dissatisfied with his treatment by the Song court after this success, and he defected to the Mongols. He told Kublai that to achieve conquest of the Song, he needed to capture the key Song stronghold of Xiangyang. Kublai’s troops embarked on a siege of Xiangyang, which lasted several years. In the end they captured Xiangyang, and in 1276, the Song court surrendered. A number of Song leaders refused to give up, however. They set up an alternate government in Guangdong on the ships of the Song navy. When Kublai learned of this, he sent his own fleet to put an end to them. In 1279, the two fleets fought the Battle of Yamen, in which the Mongols won a decisive victory, leaving Kublai with control of all of China. He declared himself emperor of China and established the Yuan dynasty, which lasted nearly a hundred years, until 1368.

Chapter 6
Ruling an Empire

The rise of the Yuan dynasty represents the end of the Mongol expansion. The Mongols had many issues to deal with, including fostering economic stability, making sure that travel was safe, and ensuring that the various cultures in their empire could coexist more or less peacefully. Ultimately, the Mongol conquests changed the character of the medieval world. The incorporation of cultures with varying ethnicities and religions and the fostering of East-West trade created lasting cultural influences from the cross-fertilization of cultures.

A New Administration

Kublai Khan established his first capital at Xanadu, but later moved it to Dadu, the site of modern-day Beijing. Controlling a country the size of China, with millions of inhabitants, required an enormous organization. Kublai divided China into a central area and outlying areas, which were governed by appointed officials. He established public schools and an academy to train officials and administrators. He built trade ports and promoted the development of the arts, science, and medicine. He protected the trade routes between China

and the West. It was during Kublai's reign that Marco Polo, the son of an Italian merchant who traveled the caravan routes, came to China and took up residence at the Chinese court.

Women in Mongol Society

Unlike many other societies of the period, such as those under Islamic rule and in China, Mongol culture traditionally respected women. Men did hold the dominant leadership roles, but even rulers like Genghis Khan routinely sought the advice of women in their decision-making. In a nomadic society, the contribution of all members is critical to survival. Women, therefore, usually had responsibilities beyond bearing and raising children.

A Mongolian woman competes in an archery tournament. Mongolian women were taught to ride and use bows and could hunt and, if necessary, defend the Mongol encampment.

There is evidence that women as well as men received military training, which makes sense in a society where the bulk of the men are away for significant periods. The best women fighters fought along with the male warriors in battle. Giovanni DiPlano Carpini visited the Mongols in 1245-1247 at the request of Pope Innocent IV. In his book *The Story of the Mongols Whom We Call Tartars,* he wrote, "Girls and women ride and gallop as skillfully as men. We even saw them carrying quivers and bows, and the women can ride horses for as long as the men. ...

women make everything: skin clothes, shoes, leggings, and everything made of leather. They drive carts and repair them, they load camels, and are quick and vigorous in all their tasks. They all wear trousers, and some of them shoot just like men." When the Mongols conquered other societies, the Mongol women retained their independence and refused to adopt the more restrictive customs imposed on women, such as Chinese foot binding.

The Silk Road

From Genghis Khan to Kublai Khan, establishing and protecting the trade routes to the West was a priority. The merchants who traveled the caravan routes brought necessary clothing, food, and other goods to the Mongols. To ensure the security of trade, the Mongols allowed the merchants to use the Mongol way stations, which offered provisions and assistance. The Mongols protected the merchants from bandits, and if they were attacked, their losses were reimbursed. The Silk Road was an avenue not only for the exchange of goods, but also for the exchange of ideas. The merchants who traveled from Europe, for example, brought back with them information on Islamic and Chinese science, philosophy, medicine, and other knowledge.

Paper Money

The Chinese pioneered printing, and they printed paper money as far back as 960 CE, but the primary medium of exchange was coins made of precious metals. The Mongols were the first to make paper money the official government medium of exchange. Its use was first authorized by Genghis Khan in 1227. Paper money must represent something of intrinsic value. In the case of the Mongols, paper currency was backed by precious metals, mostly silver ingots made by the Chinese, and silk, of which the government maintained a stored quantity. Ogedei Khan issued paper money backed by silk reserves.

The value of each unit of paper money depends on how many bills are in circulation. If too much money is in circulation, then each bill becomes less valuable and it takes more bills to buy an item or service. This situation is called inflation. In 1253, Mongke Khan established the Department of Monetary Affairs. Its job was to control the issuance of paper money, to combat inflation. A standard measure for the value of paper money was established, based on the silver ingot. Standardizing the value of paper money made it possible to collect taxes in cash rather than goods. Outside China, the areas ruled by the Mongols continued to rely primarily on coins made of copper, silver, and gold.

The End of the Empire

Throughout Kublai's reign, a schism existed between Kublai, with his Chinese empire, and the other descendants of Genghis Khan, who preferred the traditional Mongol way of life on the steppes. One of the strongest opponents was one of Ogedei's grandsons, Kaidu. Resenting the fact that the throne had been diverted away from Ogedei's line of succession, Kaidu maintained lasting enmity toward Kublai. Kaidu remained in control of Mongolia proper and Turkistan until he died in 1301.

A map shows the extent of the Mongol Empire as of 1405. Over Genghis Khan's lifetime the Mongols gained control of much of Asia and Eastern Europe.

Genghis Khan had divided the Mongol Empire into four administrative zones, called khanates. The khanates were: the Golden Horde in southern Russia and the Balkans, the Chagatai Khanate in the west, the Il-Khanate in the southwest, and the Yuan dynasty. The rulers of each khanate pursued their own interests and goals. By the time Kublai died in 1294, the Mongol Empire had effectively become four smaller empires. In 1304, the three western khanates did agree to a token acknowledgment of the rule of the Yuan dynasty. However, in 1368, the Yuan dynasty was overthrown by the Ming dynasty, and the unified Mongol Empire dissolved.

A Lasting Influence

The Mongols embody a contradiction. On one hand, they were brutal conquerors who killed entire populations and razed complete cities in the course of their conquests. On the other, they pioneered many advances in both military and civilian technology. In the military arena, they developed innovative tactics still used in modern times, propelled exploding shells, employed the first mortar, and developed a system of promotion based on skill and merit rather than racial, religious, or family connections. They created the first mail delivery system, paper money, and the use of a regular census.

Through their incorporation of members of different cultures and the establishment and protection of the

Silk Road, which allowed the exchange of goods and information between the East and West, the Mongols encouraged the spread of knowledge from one part of the world to the other. Through their destruction of the established political structure in areas like Russia and the Middle East, they laid the groundwork for the rise of new political orders that still influence our world today.

Glossary

allegiance Loyalty to a person or country.

battering ram A large, heavy device used to break down a wall or gate by repeatedly hitting it.

breach To break or make a hole in.

caravan A group of merchants traveling together.

catapult A large piece of military equipment used to hurl large objects over the walls of a target.

clan A tribal group of related people.

close combat Fighting that takes place face-to-face rather than from a distance.

composite bow A bow made of different materials combined together.

envoy An official representative of a ruler or government.

eradicate To wipe out.

feign Pretend.

flank The side of a military formation.

foray A rapid raid.

fortification A military structure built for protection.

garrison A permanent military post.

Golden Horde The part of the Mongol army that overran Russia and eastern Europe.

halberd A double-headed axe on a long pole.

havoc Chaos or disorder.

ingot A bar of metal, usually of a standard size.

mace A type of spiked club.

mercenary A soldier who fights for whoever pays him.

military intelligence Information collected about an enemy,

mortar A mobile weapon consisting of a long tube mounted on wheels, which could propel an object such as a shell.

nomad A member of a tribe that moves from place to place rather than living in one fixed place.

siege To surround a city or fortification to keep the inhabitants from getting help or supplies in order to weaken them and capture it.

sinew A tough type of tissue that connects muscles to bones.

tribute Money or goods paid to a conqueror by a conquered nation to ensure peace.

vassal A person who owes loyalty and usually military support to another in return for the right to retain land.

For More Information

Agha Khan Museum
77 Wynford Drive
Toronto, ON M3C 1K1
Canada
(416) 646-4677
Website: https://www.agakhanmuseum.org
The Agha Khan Museum maintains a collection of artifacts from southeast Asia and the Middle East, including manuscripts, paintings, metalwork, and other items from the medieval period.

American Museum of Natural History
Central Park West at 79th Street
New York, NY 10024
(212) 769-5100
Website: http://www.amnh.org
The American Museum of Natural History's anthropology collection contains more than fifty-five thousand historical items from Asia.

Art Institute of Chicago
111 South Michigan Avenue
Chicago, IL 60603
(312) 443-3600
Website: http://www.artic.edu
The extensive collection at the Art Institute includes medieval Asian, Chinese, and Islamic art and artifacts.

Metropolitan Museum of Art
1000 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10028
(212) 535-7710
Website: http://www.metmuseum.org
The museum has collections of Asian and Chinese art and artifacts, including Mongol and Yuan dynasty pieces.

Montreal Museum of Fine Arts
1379 Sherbrooke Street West
Montreal, QC H3G 2T9
Canada
(514) 285-2000
Website: https://www.mbam.qc.ca
The museum's Archeology and World Cultures Collection includes historic and artistic items from Asian and Islamic cultures.

Museum of Fine Arts (MFA)
465 Huntington Avenue
Boston, MA 02115
(617) 267-9300
Website: http://www.mfa.org
The MFA offers collections of medieval Chinese, Asian, and Islamic art and artifacts.

Princeton University Art Museum
McCosh Walk, Princeton University
Princeton, NJ 08544
Website: http://artmuseum.princeton.edu
The Asian art collection includes art and artifacts from the Yuan dynasty.

The Smithsonian Institution Freer and Sackler Galleries of Art
Smithsonian Institution
1050 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20013-7012
(202) 633-1000
Website: http://www.asia.si.edu
These galleries house a vast collection of Asian and Chinese art and artifacts, including those from the medieval period.

Websites

Because of the changing nature of Internet links, Rosen Publishing has developed an online list of websites related to the subject of this book. This site is updated regularly. Please use this link to access this list:

http://www.rosenlinks.com/MON/conq

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Index

A

Abbasid Caliphate, 40, 41
Ala ad-Din Muhammad, 29
alliances, military, 11, 42, 47
animism, 15
Ariq Boke, 44
Ayyubid dynasty, 42

B

Baghdad, 40–42
Batu Khan, 35, 36, 39
Béla IV, 39
Borte, 9, 11, 30
Buddhists, 15

C

Carpini, Giovanni DiPlano, 50
Caucasus, 33
census taking, 15, 54
Chagatai Khanate, 53
Chang'an, 47
children, 18, 49
China, 13, 22, 25–29, 44, 45–48
Chormaqan, 34
Christians, 15, 37, 42
Crusades and Crusaders, 37, 45
currency, 51, 54

D

Dadu, 48
Dali Kingdom, 45–46
Duan Xingzhi, 46

E

engineering, 18–19, 24, 30
espionage, 22

F

fortifications, 18, 19, 22, 24

G

Genghis Khan (Temujin), 9, 11,13–15, 16–19, 23–24, 25,27, 28, 30, 32, 49
Georgia, 33–35
Golden Horde, 35, 53
government, 13–15, 44, 48

H

Henry II (duke), 38
horses, 13, 18, 20, 23, 50
Hulegu Khan, 30, 40–44, 45
Hungary, 31, 37, 38, 39

I

Il-Khanate, 53

J

Jalal ad-Din Mingburnu, 33–34
Jebe, 27, 31
Jin Empire, 27, 29, 33, 47

K

Kaidu, 52–53
Kaifeng, 29, 47
Kalka River, 31–32
Karakorum, 42

Keimen, 25
keshik, 19
Khilok River, 11
Khitan, 27
Khwarezmian Empire, 29–31
kidnapping, 11, 15
Kievan Rus, 28, 31–32, 35–38
Kitbuqa, 42, 44, 45
Knights Templar, 37, 38
Kublai Khan, 44, 45–46, 48, 52–53

L

Legnica, 38
Li Anquan, 25
Liu-Ke, 27
livestock, 13, 15, 16
Luoyang, 47

M

Mamluks, 42–45
Merkits, 11
Mesopotamia (Iraq), 30, 40–42
military organization and tactics,11, 16–18, 23–24, 28, 30,53
Mongke/Mongke Khan, 35–36,40–41, 42
Mukden, 27
Muslims, 15, 40
Musta'sim, Al-, 40–42

N

Nasir Yusuf, An-, 42
nomads and nomadic lifestyle,12–13, 18, 27, 49

O

Ogedei Khan, 30, 33, 39, 40
Ong, 11
Otrar, 30

P

Poland, 31, 37, 38
Polo, Marco, 48

R

religion, 15, 37, 48

S

Sajó River, 39
siege warfare, 23, 24, 25, 27, 30,
35–38, 41, 47
Silk Road, 25, 27, 50–51, 54
Sit River, 35
slavery, 15, 44
Song dynasty, 33, 44, 47
Subutai, 31, 39
Syria, 30, 40, 42, 45

T

tamma, 18
Teutonic Order, 38
traders and trading, 13, 22, 25,
27, 29, 38, 39, 48, 50–51

W

weapons, 18, 19, 20–23, 28, 47, 53
women, 15, 18, 49–50

X

Xanadu, 48
Xia Empire (Tangut Empire), 25–27
Xiangyang, 47

Y

yam, 20, 22, 50
Yamen, 47
Yinchaun, 25
Yuan dynasty, 47, 48, 53

Z

Zhangjakou, 27
Zhongdu (Beijing), 27, 29

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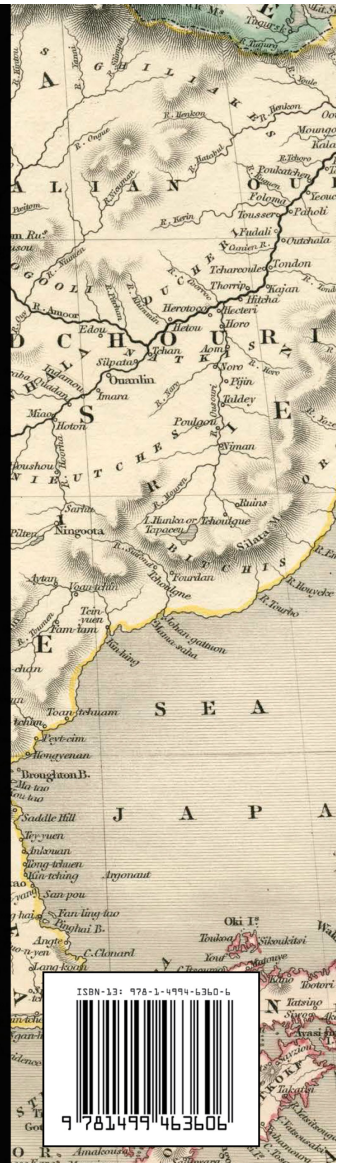
Trade, Transportation, and Cross-Cultural Exchange in the Mongol Empire

The Yuan Dynasty



ISBN-13: 978-1-4994-6360-6
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ROSEN PUBLISHING